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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LJUBLJANA 000824

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SUBJECT: SLOVENIA: FM RUPEL ON KOSOVO, SERBIA AND CROATIA'S  
EU ASPIRATIONS

Classified By: COM Thomas b. Robertson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. C) Foreign Minister Rupel reiterated to COM Slovenia's support for moving forward in a timely manner on Kosovo status. COM pressed on the need for unity on this point since Rupel had speculated to a gather of the diplomatic community in Ljubljana the day before that certain "conditional formulas" might be proposed that take into account the interests of both Serbia and Kosovo. Rupel had no clear prediction on the outcome of Serbian elections, and he suggested that Croatia would have to bend to the will of the EU rather than pursue its current tack of getting the EU to buy onto its politically inspired act involving the fisheries and ecological zone in the Adriatic. End Summary.

¶2. (U) In a December 20 meeting scheduled the evening before, with FM Dimitrij Rupel, COM discussed the impending decision on Kosovo independence, bilateral relations with Croatia and Slovenian views of upcoming Serbian elections.

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Stay Together on Kosovo  
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¶3. (C) Using guidelines provided by EUR/SCE, COM delivered a clear message on the imperative that the EU be in lock-step in support of Ahtisaari and his proposed timetable on Kosovo status. Responding to Rupel,s concern that the Russians might veto a UNSC vote on recognizing an independent Kosovo, COM responded that if Russia thought it could divide the EU internally, as well as from the U.S., it would exploit that opportunity. However, if presented with a united front, and Slovenia should be vocal about this with its colleagues, Russia would be less likely to make trouble. Rupel agreed that there is no room for compromise, and everyone knows this. He related that Serbian FM Vuk Draskovic told him there would be &after-shocks8 for about six months and then the majority would move forward. Democratic forces in Serbia know they lost Kosovo in 1999.

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Serbia Elections Hard to Predict  
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¶4. (C) Rupel,s reply to a question about the outcome of January elections in Serbia was &it depends on who you talk to8 and that he had heard in Tirana recently from the

Serbian Minister of Economy that regardless, &Kostunica would be in the government.<sup>8</sup> (Apparently the Serbs subsequently backed away from this comment, due Rupel surmised, to U.S. pressure.) Rupel frankly explained that Slovenia is working both sides (Kosovo and Serbia) to ensure continuity in its good relations, and currently, he admitted, Slovenia is giving a little more attention to Serbia. He was very glad that Serbia had been given PpP as a signal that there is a future in the West for Serbia. Rupel also waxed on the struggle between progressive, pro-European forces and the retrograde nationalists, predicting the progressives would win. He added that it would be the responsibility of the international community to ensure that if Tadic receives more votes (as Rupel believes he will), Kostunica must be shown the advantages and benefits of cooperating with Tadic and avoid the temptation of forming a competing coalition with less acceptable political partners. Rupel thought the Radicals might win 30%, or more, of the vote, consistent with the latest polling he had seen. He hoped, however, they would remain too distasteful for any coalition and therefore not find purchase in any new government. Rupel is planning to visit Serbia in January, before elections. He said there was agreement at the GAERC that several EU FMs would go, though he thought they would not &march on Belgrade<sup>8</sup> together, however, they might meet up while there. Rupel,s final comment on this was that he would &really like to help (his) friend Vuk.<sup>8</sup>

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Croatia Must Bend to the EU  
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15. (C) COM and Rupel discussed Croatia in light of the Government of Croatia,s most recent moves on maritime

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issues. Rupel said Slovenia had almost no interest in this latest dust-up except on a political level, since Slovenia has few ships in its fishing fleet. He commented that if Croatia truly wants membership, it must embrace EU values, and not expect the EU will embrace Croatian standards that have been developed primarily to draw domestic support for the ruling party. When asked if he didn't think Croatian PM Sanader understood this, Rupel replied yes, though he does not demonstrate it. As with Serbia, Rupel sees a struggle in Croatia between progressive and retrograde forces. In fact, he sees this struggle occurring across eastern Europe, including in Slovenia. There is a segment of the population and politicians who think that the omnipotent state, which provides all services and benefits to the people, can be resurrected. Rupel added that Italian FM D'Alema would visit Slovenia in early January, and he was certain working with Croatia would be among the topics of discussion.

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